

LOS ANGELES - Today, Congressman Xavier Becerra (CA-31) joined with LA City Councilman Ed Reyes to host a senior resource fair to provide seniors with information beneficial for their day-to-day life and urged seniors to take precautions against scams targeting their federal benefits. Representatives from a variety of government agencies and social service organizations answered questions and offered information on a variety of local programs available to seniors. During the resource fair, Congressman Becerra released the following statement:

"We keep America's promise to our parents and grandparents by ensuring that they can retire with dignity after a lifetime of work. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid (MediCal in California) make that promise possible. They are indispensable programs for America's seniors and their security. Today's fair is about making sure that our seniors have the tools they need to live a healthy, secure and fulfilling retirement. We keep our nation strong by keeping our seniors' retirement secure."



Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General for the Social Security Administration, joined Congressman Becerra to remind seniors about the phasing out of paper check payments for federal benefit recipients and to provide tips on how to avoid fraud such as identity theft scams. Starting March 1, 2013, recipients of Social Security, VA and other federal benefits will be required to receive payments electronically through direct deposit to a bank or credit union or receive them by a Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card account.

"The Office of the Inspector General fully supports the transition to electronic benefit payments, but we are here today with Congressman Becerra to encourage seniors to be vigilant about protecting their personal information to prevent identity theft, said Inspector General O'Carroll, Jr. "Enterprising identity thieves have managed to divert some seniors' Social Security benefits by stealing their personal information. While we are working to eliminate this type of fraud, we are also asking seniors to take steps to protect themselves against it."

The resource fair, made possible through the collaboration with Councilmember Ed Reyes, offered free flu shots provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and health screenings for seniors through local organizations.

"One of the biggest challenges facing our seniors is accessing information that enhances their quality of life," said Councilmember Ed P. Reyes. "So I am proud to co-sponsor this event along with Congressmember Xavier Becerra to bring agencies such as the Department of Social Security and the City of Los Angeles' Department of Aging to our neighborhoods to give our seniors greater access to the benefits they have earned and for which they have paid."